

Mike Ross testimony

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 3815, the Presidential Historic Site Study Act, a bipartisan bill that I offered earlier this year.

This bill simply begins the normal process for preserving an important American presidential landmark. American Presidents are a hallmark of our society. The way in which Americans forever remember leadership of the "greatest nation" is through their policies, their words, and through the people and places that have shaped their lives. We place a great historical significance on the homes of President's because, indeed, they are a part of our nation's history. They are where our leaders formed the beliefs and values that shaped their decisions and legacies. The meaning of these historic presidential landmarks has moved anyone who has visited Mt. Vernon, Monticello, Abraham Lincoln's birthplace at Spring Creek, or Ronald Reagan's birthplace. The birthplace home of President William Jefferson Clinton holds a piece of our presidential history, and it is only fitting for it to be designated as a National Historic Site.

I share the unique opportunity of being the Representative of former President Clinton's birthplace home, Hope, Arkansas. In fact, I am a 1979 graduate of Hope High School. In that small town called Hope, President Clinton was educated and encouraged by a loving family in a home at 117 South Hervey Street, Hope, AR. This home stands as a marker of his hermitage. President Clinton lived in several homes in Hope; however, I have enclosed as part of my official testimony a copy of personal correspondence from President Clinton designating this home as his "official birthplace for purposes of historic significance."

Today, the home is a tourist attraction to the local area and is seeking to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places as a National Landmark. The Clinton Birthplace Foundation was formed several years ago. The foundation has successfully renovated the birthplace home as a museum and visitors center. To establish the "William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home" as a National Historic Site, a feasibility study must be completed. That is what we are seeking to do with this legislation.

The eventual designation as a National Historic Site will open the doors of economic opportunity through added tourism to Southwest Arkansas. Thirty-one of my fellow colleagues are currently cosponsors on H.R. 3815, including every member of the Arkansas delegation. My home state's Governor, Mike Huckabee-a Republican, is supportive of this study. Arkansans view this home as part of our long legacy of history within the state. This is not about politics, but instead about the rich history of Arkansas and our Nation. This site will, not only, educate the thousands of visitors each year that come to learn about this part of American history, but perhaps most importantly, bring more jobs, more opportunities, and more economic development to a part of my district that greatly needs it.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the Members of the Subcommittee for allowing me to testify this afternoon. I hope that this bill will be marked up soon and offered before the House of Representatives. I will be happy to answer any questions the members of the Committee might have.

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